45
NOVACON

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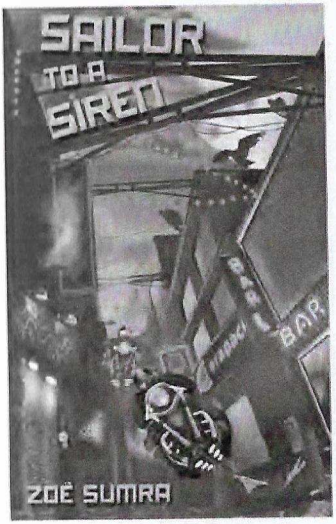
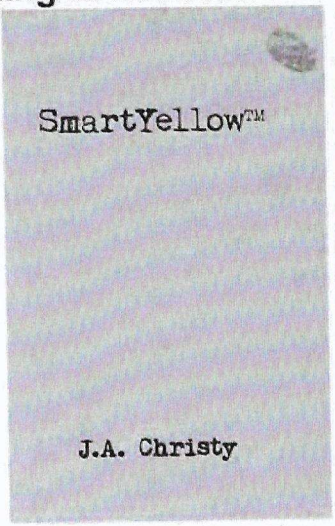
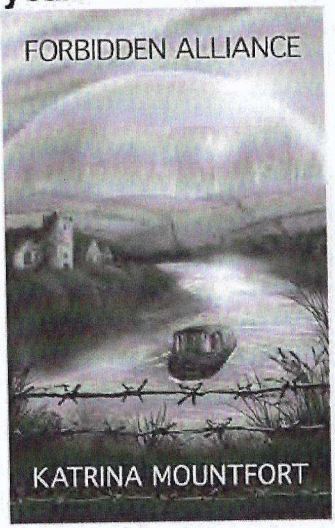
Launching at Novacon this year:



11:00-12:00 Saturday

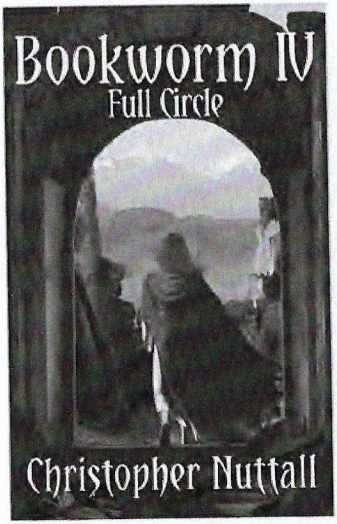


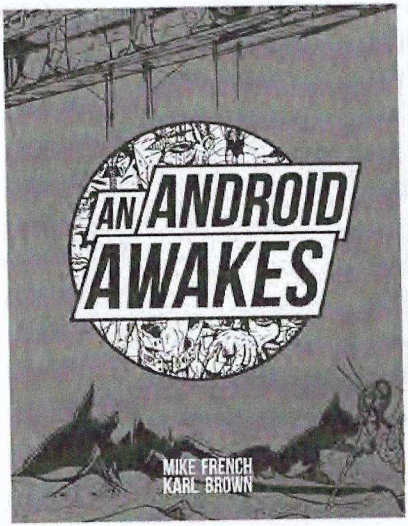
14:00-15:00 Saturday



11:00-12:00 Sunday

Also available for the first time this weekend:





Come and see us in the Dealers' Room or online at elsewhen.co.uk

Novacon 45

Park Inn Hotel, Nottingham

13th–15th November 2015

Guests of Honour

Stan and Anne Nicholls

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Acknowledgements

Thanks to our contributors as listed above, and all of the contributors to Novacon publications in previous years, which we've shamelessly raided.

Cover illustration by Anne Nicholls.

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THE 75TH WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION
WORLDCON 75
9–13 AUGUST, 2017
MESSUKESKUS ◆ HELSINKI ◆ FINLAND
WWW.WORLDCON.FI

Chairman's Hello

Welcome to Novacon 45. You are of course sitting in the bar on Friday reading this whilst enjoying the first of many pints. Not that I'm encouraging such things you understand; please drink responsibly. Then have another and drink that responsibly. Then have ...

We're spoiling you this year by giving you two guests for the price of one, that is we're too mean to pay them individually. Stan and Anne Nicholls will be known to most of you already: Stan mostly for his fantasy works, and Anne (writing as Anne Gay) for a number of science fiction novels. Anne has been attending the Birmingham SF Group for many years, and this is where I first met her. I remember Rog Peyton waving her book, Mindsail, at me saying "Read this! It's proper SF!" So I did, and then I bought her others as they came out. I have to admit I haven't read as much of Stan's stuff, preferring SF to Fantasy, but I intend to put that right, especially after reading the reviews of his Orc books in the PRs. So many books, so little time, especially when you read as glacially slowly as I do.

So, what else can we offer you? Well, there is the usual Novacon fare, with an artshow downstairs, art and book auctions where you can get rid of that annoying currency, book launches, panels and a quiz. We also have more science for you to sink your brain into. Visit the dealers' room and spend more money, but remember to leave enough to buy raffle tickets. Proceeds go to the RNIB Talking Books charity. Downstairs near the artshow Dave Lally will be running his usual video room which is always worth checking out just to see what kind of strange and obscure stuff he's come up with. Downstairs also is the other bar, which can be used for lounge space and has a pool table. Take time to have a go at the prestigious GCSFE quiz and get your answers in; those with top marks will be put in to a draw to win either a new car or a bottle of wine, we haven't decided yet.

On Sunday evening there is the famous beer-tasting for which I trust you've brought some beer, or buy a badge from Registration. Accompanying this is the hot food buffet, for which you must buy a ticket on Saturday if you want to partake. Soft drinks are included in the price. This year it has an Italian flavour. I hope you can stay for this because who wants to go to work on Monday morning anyway? Tell them you're sick, or you've been abducted by aliens, or bitten by a zombie, or worse you accidentally heard a Justin Bieber record and need a course of therapy.

Finally, I have to thank my committee, the tech crew, auctioneers, artshow team, gophers, programme participants and the other volunteers who ensure that the convention runs smoothly. Of course if it doesn't run smoothly, it's all their fault.

Tony Berry

Meet the Committee

It's a well-known and widely-accepted scientific fact that any individual's capabilities and personality are uniquely and completely predicted by their name, the accuracy or otherwise of that prediction being determined solely by the choice of language used for the translation.

Novacon's crack team of linguists and nominative determinists are taking this opportunity to present their findings as we introduce the committee.

Douglas Spencer

Chairman / Hotel Liaison / Beer: Tony Berry

A tone is the quantum unit of musical production (tony in adjectival form), and a berry is a small fruit. So we believe that Tony's ideal career involves producing very small amounts of something a bit like music.

Memberships and Hotel Rooms: Steve Lawson

Steve is taken from a Greek word στέφανοσ, a word with two meanings. In one sense, it refers to a great crown of honour, a wonderful reward – but in another sense it means something which surrounds, encompasses or conceals. Meanwhile Lawson means son-in-law. So it's evident that Steve looked like becoming the best of all possible sons-in-law, but for some reason all that wonderful potential remains completely hidden.

Treasurer: Eve Harvey; Website: John Harvey

Eve, in the Bible, was the first created woman, and the source of all life; John, in US police parlance, is just some random unidentified man; while Harvey, in the 1950 film, is a nature spirit or a companion ghost, taking the form of a six-and-a-half foot tall rabbit. The team confess that sometimes it can be less than obvious how to interpret the meanings of names. Perhaps it means that Eve and John are best employed supplying the committee with large quantities of wine, cheese, pâté and mushrooms.

Secretary: Cat Coast

A cat is a small predatory animal which specialises in living off of those foolish humans who believe that it's been domesticated, while coast refers to something which approaches and lies alongside a collection of wildly unpredictable wet things milling around helplessly buffeted by their environment. Cat is destined to be a secretary to a convention committee.

Programme: Theresa Derwin
Theresa is a corruption of the Greek word θερίζω meaning harvest, and Derwin was a Victoren sciantist and euthor of *Dascant of Men* and *Origin of Spacias*. Now Theresa is ideally placed to gather together all the typos she can find, to preserve them, and to sell them in a book. Or e-book.

Programme and Illustrations: Dave Hicks
D.A.V.E. from the Batman stories is the Digitally Advanced Villain Emulator, an artificial intelligence programmed with the personalities of several supervillains. A hick is a self-reliant individual from a rural area, getting by without interest in or access to advanced technology or city life. It seems that Dave might be a sort of computerised gestalt of evil yokels.

Programme and Social Media: Helena Bowles
Helena means like Helen, only more so, and bowls is the game that Sir Francis Drake was playing, a game that he was enjoying so much that he delayed going to sort out the Spanish Armada. So Helena is the social media presence that launched rather more than a thousand ships ... but after an entirely avoidable short delay.

Social Media: Richard Standage
Rich means wealthy, hard means difficult, a stand is a sort of mobile booth used for selling goods, and an age is a very very long time. We think that Richard could make a lot of money as a market trader, but it won't be easy for him and it might take quite a while.

Compliance Officer: Alice Lawson
Strictly speaking Alice is a mis-transcription, since the indirect article shows that "lice" should have been cited using the singular. However, with that minor correction, we have to conclude that Alice is something small and scary that prompts us to clean things up and get things sorted out.

Publications: Douglas Spencer
Douglas is a name lifted straight out of the Goidelic languages, and translates into English as "dweller beside the dark water", an expression considered to be emblematic of a kind of black depression. Spencer refers to a specialist in the act of distribution. So this person is best at spreading doom and gloom.

The Gemmell Awards

The Gemmell Awards for Fantasy have been running over the last seven years, and through all that time have been headed up (at least in part) by the wonderful Stan and Anne Nicholls. Many other people have played crucial roles over the years, but since the very inception of these wonderful awards they have both been at the very heart of things, devoting their time, energy and enthusiasm to the Gemmells.

But first I want to track back a bit to my first experience of the Gemmells themselves – back in 2010, only the second time the awards had run in honour of the very fine fantasy author and absolute gentlemen that was David Gemmell. I was there in my Desk Editor role with Black Library, with the highly talented Graham McNeill and a couple of other guys from the team. We had a fabulous night at The Magic Circle in London, with drinks, canapes and a great deal of fun and conversation had all round. The celebrations were enhanced mightily by the fact that Graham won the Legend Award for Empire – and gave a rousing speech about the influence that Gemmell had upon him. From the Awards themselves we hit a host of bars and clubs, but not before dropping Graham's mighty Snaga axe with the concierge at the hotel. Imagine the scene, if you will – three of us roll up with a huge black case and drop off at the desk.

Can we leave this here please?
Of course, sir. What is it?
It's an axe.
Very good, sir.
No, seriously. It's an axe.
Oh, I see...

Anyway, it wasn't too long before I was moving on from Black Library to explore a host of freelance opportunities out there. It's been quite an experience, and one of the joys of it is that you never quite know where it's going to take you. For one example, you get a very cool invite to write something for the Novacon programme booklet. But, more to the point, you pop into Radio Derby with Stan and Anne to talk a bit about Edge-Lit 2012 – the first year of my genre shindig in my adopted hometown – and get a quiet word about the possibility of being PR Officer for the Gemmell Awards.

It's one of those really exciting invitations that it feels silly to say *no* to.

So I didn't.

PR is something I was pretty well self-taught, but the Gemmells were something I had long been aware of and also thought of pretty highly as a good, progressive award for an area of fiction doubtless going through a fascinating transition. Three years on, it's a decision I can safely say that I've never regretted. The whole experience has been wonderful, enriching and brought me into contact with some of the most exciting fantasy authors around.

And that's exactly what the Gemmells is all about – celebrating some of the very finest talent in the field. It's a way for the fans to say thank you to the authors of great fantasy series, to acknowledge the very best of the best of what is a genre that is booming at the moment – not just in commercial terms but also in terms of pure quality of writing and imagination. But the Gemmells over its seven years has become more than that – it's also through the Morningstar award brought the focus to some of the most exciting new and emerging authors in the field, and on top of that with the Ravenheart Award acknowledging some of the superb fantasy artwork that illustrates books all year round. With a stellar role of honour taking in Brandon Sanderson, Brent Weeks, Patrick Rothfuss, John Gwynne, Mark Lawrence, Brian McLellan, Pierre Pevel, Helen Lowe and many more, the other thing that has always struck me about these awards is just how current and modern they feel. There have been nominations for some of the legends of the field, but the fact that so many of the winners are part of a new generation of fantasy writers is one of the things that makes the awards so exciting. It's not about looking back, but very much about looking forward.

It's also a great award for being chosen by the fans. The interaction and engagement from the fantasy audience over the years has been staggering, with voting numbers rising and rising each year as more devoted readers want their say on what deserves this distinctive honour. The longlists in each category are a real who's who of fantasy fiction – the shortlists are doubtless the crème de la crème, as the people who support and hold the genre up more than anything see it.

So, what do these awards say about this year's Novacon Guests of Honour, Stan and Anne Nicholls? A number of things really – that beyond both being superb writers with excellent back catalogues, they are absolutely huge advocates of genre fiction and are happy to give their energies and skills to the furtherment of the field. That they are aware that the genre being in a good position is a benefit for everybody involved, and to selflessly offer so much to improving the standing of fantasy fiction is incredible. That they are both people with vision and innovation, drive and determination, ready and willing to take risks to bring something to life. Simply put, the Nicholls are the epitome of everything that makes the genre community such a pleasure to be a part of. It's been wonderful working with them and playing a small part in the Gemmells over the last few years, and with Stan and Anne continuing at the helm I'm sure these wonderful awards will continue to go from strength to strength in the future.

I'll leave it to folk more eloquent than myself to say something about their great respective bodies of writing, but be sure to show them both some love this weekend by heading to their Guest of Honour sessions. Trust me, you won't regret it.

Alex Davis

MANCUNICON
Eastercon 2016

- The UK's longest-running science fiction convention
- Four days of talks, panels, events, exhibits and fun
- City centre site in one of our most vibrant cities
- Completely volunteer-run not-for-profit event

OUR GUESTS OF HONOUR

ALIETTE DE BODARD

DAVID L. CLEMENTS

IAN McDONALD

SARAH PINBOROUGH

The 67th British National SF Convention
25-28 March 2016, Hilton Deansgate, Manchester
www.mancunicon.org.uk

About the Programme

All the information about items, descriptions, and participants that I had to hand when the Programme Book went to press is listed below.

We've made an effort to provide fifteen-minute gaps between programme items so that you can stretch your legs, buy more beer, or sit gazing into space pondering the awesome quality of work in this Programme Book. The sizes of the gaps and the precise durations of the items can to be found in the Readme.

The main programme takes place in the main programme room – if you've just come into the hotel via the main entrance, head left for a few yards and then turn right, and the main programme room will be in front of you at the end of the corridor.

The Programme Book is being produced two whole weeks before the convention, whereas the Readme will be assembled in the last day or two. When the Programme Book conflicts with the Readme, the Readme is more likely to be right.

Friday Main Programme

18:00 Opening ceremony
The Committee and the Guests of Honour kick things off.
Let's get this party started!

18:45 Desert Island Discs
Claire Brialey hosts with Stan and Anne choosing 9 songs between them and one book in this Novacon version of the popular programme.

20:00 Urban Fantasy: She Who Kicks Ass
The panel discuss whether Urban Fantasy is a one-trick pony featuring leather-clad kick-ass women with sarcasm and a gun.
Theresa Derwin [m], Jacey Bedford, S. G. Mulholland, Tej Turner.

21:30 Double Book launch
Stan & Anne launch a collection of short stories each:
Music from the Fifth Planet, by Anne Nicholls, The Alchemy Press;
Orcs: Tales of Maras-Dantia, by Stan Nicholls, Newcon Press.
There will be free wine and nibbles.

22:30 Fannish Stories You Can't Tell Your Daughter
Doug Spencer leads this informal item where we hear unsuitable stories of Fandom as our very own Jeremy Kyle [*I didn't write that line – DS*].
Expect audience participation.

Saturday Main Programme

10:30 Science Talk: The Life and Death of Galaxies
One of the outstanding challenges in modern astronomy is to explain why galaxies in the most crowded regions of the Universe appear mostly old, round, red, and dead. In this talk Dr Meghan Gray will describe the field of 'galaxy ecology', and explain how we use observations from telescopes around the world and in space to chart the violent lives of galaxies.

12:15 "There is very little decent SF being written nowadays", Vernon Brown
The great inimitable Vernon Brown inspires this panel discussion with Theresa Derwin [m], Janet Edwards, Gav Thorpe, Bryony Pearce.

13:30 Transformative Fandom
Helena Bowles leads a discussion on the wide subject of transformative fandom, from fan fiction, to LARPing, to Cosplay and beyond.
Helena Bowles [m], Mags, Theresa Derwin, Ian Sorenson, Doug Spencer.

14:45 What is Fandom For?
Guest of Honour slot with Stan and Anne Nicholls sharing some entertaining anecdotes.

16:15 Workshop: Plate Tectonics and the Rock Cycle
Helen Gould delivers an audience participation style workshop on Plate Tectonics and the Rock Cycle, complete with samples.

17:30 How to Survive the End of the World in Ten Easy Steps
The post-apocalyptic discussion, with Theresa Derwin [m], Dave Weaver, S. G. Mulholland, Bryony Pearce, James Starling.

18:45 I Am Groot
How has the comic book industry changed in recent years?
Dave Holmes [m], Stan Nicholls, Steve Lawson, Dave Hicks.

20:00 Awards Hullabaloo: Sad Puppies
Are fans right to get so angry about awards systems? Should we take it so seriously? Doug Spencer [m], Stan Nicholls, Anne Nicholls, Chris Nuttall.

21:30 Pub Quiz
Join us for a Novacon special SF Pub Quiz. There will be prizes!

About the Off-Piste Programme

A range of activities are taking place "off-piste". The off-piste area is downstairs – if you've just come into the hotel via the main entrance make a hairpin turn to your right to find the staircase and head down it.
As well as the Lally Programme and the Art Show, there is a programme of other items, most of which will take place in the downstairs bar.

Note that only one of the lifts serves the downstairs bar. Beware!

I imagine we'll have a flipchart in the lobby with off-piste information on it.

Saturday Off-Piste

11:00 Elsewhen Book Launch
Sailor to a Siren, by Zoë Sumra.
Space opera with a nod to gangland thrillers.
Two brothers steal a narcotics shipment only to find it contains a prototype superweapon that could destabilise galactic peace. Soon everyone is after them. A great debut from Zoë establishing her as a name to watch in epic space opera.

13:00 Pasgon Presentation
Find out about the Cardiff Eastercon in 2017.

14:00 Elsewhen Book Launch
SmartYellow, by J. A. Christy.
A worryingly plausible glimpse into an alternate Britain where the socially undesirable are marked with SmartYellow making it easier to track and control them and maintain them in a state of fruitless inactivity.

17:30 Workshop: Character Building
With Anne Nicholls. Sign up in the morning at Registration. Places limited.

18:45 Book Party
Come and join a selection of small presses and SFF authors for readings, wine and book launches. Helen Gould, Alex Davis, The Alchemy Press, Elsewhen Press, Bryony Pearce, Jacey Bedford.

23:00 Book Auction
Join us in the bar downstairs for debauchery, mayhem and book sales, as ever with Rog Peyton.

Sunday Main Programme

10:30 Science Talk: Will We Ever Have a *Star Trek* Replicator?
Dr Philip Moriarty with a talk on nanotech – nanoassemblers, nanobots etc – and the issue of whether 3D printing with atoms is a viable future technology. Related to the themes of Neale Stephenson's *The Diamond Age*.

12:15 The Future of Eastercon
See the article about The Future of Eastercon Panel on the opposite page.
Caroline Mullan, Steve Davies, Tim Kirk, Guilia DeCesare, Judy Hodgkin.

13:30 Art Auction
See the article about the art show and art auction on the opposite page.

15:15 Boot the Reboot?
With all of these classic film remakes should we boot the reboot?
What value is there in redesigning classics such as *Spider-Man*, *Robocop*, *Ghostbusters* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still*?
Stan Nicholls, Alice Lawson [m], Tony Berry, James Starling, Jacey Bedford.

16:15 Starships in Science Fiction
Initiative for Interstellar Studies deliver a talk on starships in a whole plethora of fiction within the genre.
Kelvin F Long, Alex Storer, John Davies, Tobert Swinney, Gillian Norman.

17:30 Handover Ceremony
Who is chairing Novacon 46?

19:00 Beer Tasting
Remember to obtain a Beer Badge from Registration. You can get a beer badge for six quid, or in exchange for three bottles of interesting beer.

19:30 Buffet Banquet
Remember to buy a ticket from Registration, they'll tell you how much it costs. We might know the price in time to put it in the Readme if we're lucky.
Our guests have requested that we supply you all with Italian food. Yum yum.

Sunday Off-Piste

11:00 Elsewhen Book Launch
Forbidden Alliance, by Katrina Mountfort.
Book 2 of the Blueprint trilogy, a future in which men and women are nearly identical and personal relationships are forbidden. 16 years after *Future Perfect*, the village communities are not as idyllic as Caia had hoped.

13:30 Pasgon Reception
Munchies, tea, and cake.

14:45 Workshop: World Building
With Stan Nicolls. Sign up in the morning at Registration. Places limited.

The Lally Programme

Some say that he's divided his soul into six pieces and stored each of them in a different straw hat – and that he once started a blaster-fight in a cantina in Mos Eisley and then crept away without anyone even knowing he was there. All we know is, he's called "The Lally".

The Future of Eastercon Panel

Caroline Mullan writes as follows:

The Future of Eastercon Panel has published a questionnaire, requesting the views of science fiction fans, professionals and conrunners interested in the future of UK Eastercons. The questionnaire is now live on the Eastercon Options website.

The Panel was formed following discussion at a meeting of some 200 members of Dysprosium, the 66th Eastercon, in April 2015, and consists of Steve Davies, Judi Hodgkin, Tim Kirk and Caroline Mullan. We were asked to think about the Future of Eastercons, and report back to the members of Mancunicon, the 67th Eastercon, in 2016. We have now designed and published a questionnaire to obtain opinions about the state of Eastercons and the issues facing those interested in their future.

The questionnaire is a contribution to the wider discussion of the future of Eastercons among British science fiction fans. The initial results will be presented at Novacon 45 in Nottingham in November 2015, and followed up with feedback to the members of Mancunicon, the 67th Eastercon, in Manchester in 2016.

See the Eastercon Options website: `http://eastercon.wordpress.com/`

Art Show and Art Auction

The Art Show is downstairs. Look at the stuff. Nod sagely, if that's your style.

Each item has a bid sheet attached to it, with details of the title, the author, the medium used ...

The sheet may be marked "NFS" (not for sale). Sigh deeply and move on.

Alternatively, if the item is *not* NFS, then it *is* for sale (do please try and keep up). You can make a bid for the item – mark the sheet with your badge number, your name, and an offered price. Make sure your bid is at least as high as the reserve price (if listed), and higher than any of the preceding bids.

When you've placed bids on those items you wish to acquire, you can safely wander back to the bar and resume your drinking. Come back later to see if anyone's outbid you.

The flipchart in the lobby should tell you when the Art Show closes on Sunday.

At 13:30 on Sunday (by which time the art show will already have closed), the art auction begins in the main programme room. All items which have received a bid during the show will appear in the auction.

You do not have to have placed a bid previously in order to attend – you can watch the auction (often entertaining), and maybe bid in person – but if you want an item to be in the auction, the only way to be sure that this will happen is to place a written bid before the art show closes.

If you've previously placed a written bid, you will probably want to be there to make further bids, since there's a chance that others may outbid you.

Your auctioneers are Rog and Chris, with ½r's hat (and its occupant) keeping the books. Other luminaries will be on hand to display the pieces to the adoring audience.

If you've won an item in the auction, then you will need to pay for your item (and collect it) downstairs in the art show room afterwards. Give them a half-hour or so after the auction closes in order to sort things out – the auctioneers or their minions will be pleased to advise you.

You can pay by cash or cheque. There is a NatWest cashpoint over the road.

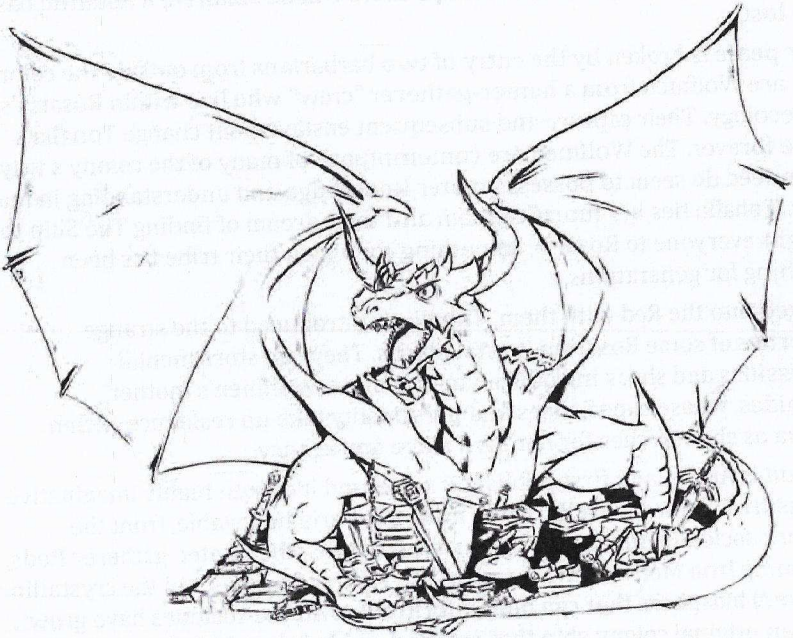
Remember, the art show is worth seeing and the art auction tends to be fun. Don't worry about the ensuing poverty, you'll have a beautiful piece of art (maybe more than one) to take home and enjoy.

Multiple-Nova-winning fan artist and writer D West died a few weeks ago. This year the art show hopes to include a number of his works.

Douglas Spencer

PASGON 2017

THE 68TH BRITISH NATIONAL SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION



14TH-17TH APRIL 2017

MERCURE HOLLAND HOUSE HOTEL
CARDIFF CF24 0DD

GUESTS OF HONOUR
JO WALTON * JUDITH CLUTE
LYN EVANS * DAVID "DC" CARLILE

INFO@PASGON.ORG.UK @PASGONCARDIFF
WWW.PASGON.ORG.UK

Review: *Mindsail*, by Anne Gay

Tohalla lives in the Green, a small patriarchal and pastoral society. They are an agricultural colony growing green Earth vegetation and fighting to expand into the Red: the crystalline biosphere native to the planet Rosaria. When we meet Tohalla she is unhappy. She has had one marriage where she failed to bring new children into the Green and her husband has died. As a low value probably-barren woman the colony patriarch intends to marry her to a severely brain damaged man. Perhaps there will be children, if not little has been lost.

Their peace is broken by the entry of two barbarians from outside the colony. They are Wolfmen from a hunter-gatherer "crew" who live within Rosaria's own ecology. Their capture and subsequent enslavement change Tohalla's future forever. The Wolfmen are contemptuous of many of the colony's ways – and indeed do seem to possess greater knowledge and understanding in many areas. Tohalla ties her future to them and their dream of finding The Ship that brought everyone to Rosaria, something for which their tribe has been searching for generations.

Dragged into the Red with them, Tohalla is introduced to the strange properties of some Rosarian crystal plants. They can store mental impressions and she is introduced to one of the Wolfmen's mother, Marchidas, whose experiences and personality take up residence within Tohalla as she searches for her own place and agency.

Mindsail is Anne Gay's first published novel and it is both highly imaginative and assured. Skilled worldbuilding makes Rosaria believable, from the different societal structures – the farming Greens, the hunter-gatherer Reds, the mining Iron Men and the threat of the raiding Mutinas – to the crystalline (silicate?) biosphere that can hold information. All the societies have grown out of an original colony ship that crashed and was lost 300 years ago. The Green represent the original colonists, the Red are tribal factions formed from the original crew who are still trying to find the lost ship. The landing was a disaster and there is a mystery about that which is slowly brought out. The ship is a questing object and a semi-religious icon. If the ship can be discovered then perhaps the "Star Kin" can be rejoined.

Tohalla is an outsider. She has grown up in a society where every action is controlled for the good of all. The Green don't even use the pronoun "I" as it promotes selfishness. Instead they refer to themselves as "a body" and it is easy to see how this would come about in a colony desperately struggling to establish itself without all of the expected supplies and equipment. It is also easy to see why reproductive control was established as the colony started with less genetic diversity than planned. Tohalla's first marriage was reasonably happy except for her childlessness. In a small agrarian society

with little technology, many children are a necessity. Tohalla understands this and desires children. Her "failure" is one that eats at her self-esteem and erodes her status within the colony.

Much of *Mindsail* is a meditation upon responding to other people's expectations, how to gain personal freedom and what that actually means. Tohalla's journey exposes her to many other societies and ideas but what always follows is other people expecting her to take on their priorities and desires. She is no better in the Red than in the Green. She has more physical freedom and more knowledge but is still subject to Ain the Wolfman's personal quest to find The Ship. She stumbles along in his wake but is ultimately unable to accept his dream as hers.

Eventually she tries to fit in back in the Green. She bears a child but even that isn't enough to allow her to be an accepted part of her society. Her daughter, Vernal, is a dream she has to give up. She starts out on her own quest to find "the Dream Ship" as she has taken to calling the Drone ship which carried supplies and genetic material for the colonists. It is a long journey and she is alone for much of it. When she does end her journey, nothing is what she expected and she has further development to go through before she manages to finally find a quest and journey worth following.

Themes in *Mindsail* include alienation and the need to find acceptance within yourself, not within other people; that you need your own dreams, not to piggyback on what other people want or what you think you should want; and, of course, to be careful of pinning your hopes on dreams as they may not be what you thought they were. Bodily autonomy and spiritual freedom are explored, and even spiritual freedom may be toxic if employed wrongly or pettily. Appropriate spiritual freedom, however – that will enable you to soar above and beyond everything.

Helena Bowles

Review: *Shake Me to Wake Me*, by Stan Nicholls

The first thing that struck me when Stan handed me the book, was the absolutely awesome cover (children's toys that look rather scary) which encapsulates what to expect from this collection. Ranging over twenty years of Stan's work, with *SPOIL* from 1993 and finishing with *The Gripes of Wrath* (yes, he did go there!) written especially for this collection, these stories are a blend of horror, fantasy and SF imbued with Stan's eloquent sense of humour.

In his introduction, Stan makes some valid and interesting points about the short story as opposed to novels, the length of any idea and the financial market of short story collections.

The collection starts with *Softies* (1994) a YA piece. It starts like a good (bad) joke; a teenage boy and a bear walk into a shopping mall. Yet no one raises an eyebrow at the living bear. The bear is the boy's Companion, and as the story progresses we meet other Companions along the way. I don't want to say too much about this story (spoilers darling) but it's a dark and wonderful analogy for slavery and discrimination. This was an excellent story, that though dark in nature, did make me chuckle.

Next we have *Picking Up the Tab* (1995). The story starts with teenager Adam setting fire to a bundle of notes, with police sirens in the distance. Cue seven days earlier. Building with a slow sense of tension, the reader discovers money, or the love of it, may truly be the root of all evil.

The earliest of the stories, *SPOIL* (1993), takes an interesting look at religion, and the impact or nature of a disease as viral as AIDS. SPOIL, though, is a disease that humanity wants, as a benediction to God. Pardon the pun, but I don't want to "spoil" the punchline. Suffice to say Stan has lots to explore about the nature of religion in this story and he does so with an adept skill. This is one of the strongest stories in the collection, and rather disturbing on an emotional level.

In *Throwing a Wobbly* (1998), Stan Introduces us to Vaughan Cramer who wakes up battling a hangover, watching a fat exhausted bee trying to move. He switches on the TV to see all variety of rotund individuals from balloonist weather girls to an obese version of Richard and Judy wedged together on a sofa. Definitely a WTF story. It should have made me uncomfortable, being overweight myself, but I have to say I grinned my way through this story, including one of the best puns I've come across, particularly the punchline.

Next up is *We Are for The Dark* (1998), starts in 1576 and appeared in the anthology *Shakespearian Detectives* from Robinson Publishing, and features a young boy named Will. I have to say that this was my favourite story, yet far away from traditional SFF or horror, which I normally read. There was just a pure enjoyment in "meeting" young Will in the midst of a murder investigation.

Three short pieces of fiction written by Stan for his stint as Guest of Honour at Fantasycon in 2000, *Three Whimsies* starts with *Alternate Reality 1: Falling In Love*. It's a strange one, and one I couldn't quite get to grips with. The second part, *Alternate Reality 2* starts much more comfortably and with a bang. It has the great subtitle, *If You Can't Do It With The Lights On, You Shouldn't Be Doing It At All*. This is a story crackling with energy and a little – something else. The third part of this literary triptych is *Alternate Reality 3: Good Brown, Charlie Grief*. This little vignette is about a pill designed for the rich – and bums. This story is "the shitz".

Next up is *Polly Put the Mockers On* (2001), with PI Markham on a job to search out a mythic macaw that could be worth its weight in gold. This particular story is a doozy. There are simply no words to describe it, other than "read it". It's bat-shit crazy.

The penultimate story in the collection is *Juice* (2011) "There had been a leakage of Joy", the story starts with. And it's up to Anders and Duthie to tackle it. When controlled "essences" escape the pipes, they have to be investigated and dealt with. As with the majority of stories in this collection, there is a message here. In this story, Stan is alerting us to the dangers of controlling people in this new society.

The collection finishes with the pun-tastic *The Gripes of Wrath* (2013) written specifically for this book. Established author Ivor Drummond experiences a truly heart-breaking migraine-inducing review of his newest novel in *The Times* courtesy of critic Philip Bradshaw. Stirred to anger, Drummond posts a rebuttal on his blog, with consequences he could never have imagined.
I would say this piece is the only horror story amongst the collection, and reads like a better, more modern episode of *Tales of the Unexpected*. The build up to darkness is tense and the end denouement is worth the wait. It's a fine, solid way to end a superlative collection of shorts.

Which brings me to my conclusion: from social commentary, to humour, to horror, to a sense of fatality, the stories in this collection are diverse, yet each one is "signature Stan". His voice shines through and it was a sheer delight to read this book, from beginning to end. A brilliant five star collection.

Theresa Derwin

General Certificate of Science Fiction Education (and Draw)

On the next few pages you will find a GCSE Question Paper.
You should also find a loose A4 size Answer Sheet in your convention bag.
If not please contact Registration.

This is a multiple choice quiz. Each question has been given several answers, only one of which is correct. They are often abbreviated because giving them in full would make the correct answer too obvious. You must match your answer to one of the given ones. It's a bit like being given specifications for making a key, together with five different locks. If the key is made correctly it will fit one of the locks, if it's not, it won't.

There are three Sections to the Paper – Section B is easy, Section A is medium and Section C has harder questions. You have to submit two Sections which must include Section A. If you submit Sections A&B you will obtain an Ordinary Level GCSE Certificate if you pass, if you submit Sections A&C you will gain an Advanced Level GCSE Certificate if you pass. Pass mark is 40% and each Certificate is graded.

Read each question, decide on your answer and match it to a given answer. The Answer Paper has numbered and lettered squares that correspond to the questions and answers on the Question Paper. Carefully BLOCK OUT with black or blue ink the squares corresponding to your chosen answers. DO NOT circle, cross or otherwise mark the squares, or use pencil, because the marking mechanism will be unable to cope with it and your paper will be rejected. If you make an error put a large X through the incorrect square.

When you have answered as many questions as possible decide whether you will submit Sections A&B (O Level) *or* Sections A&C (A Level). Mark a large cross from corner to corner of the Section that you are <u>NOT</u> submitting for marking i.e. B <u>*or*</u> C. If all three Sections are submitted, i.e. you have not crossed out either Section, only Sections A&B will be marked i.e. the paper will be marked at Ordinary Level.

Above Section A you will find two lettered squares – [O] and [A] – corresponding to the Certificate Levels. Block out the square corresponding to the Level you are submitting. If this is not done or if it is not clear which Level is being submitted only Sections A&B will be marked i.e. the Paper will be marked at O Level.

PRINT your name and address legibly in the space provided – your answer paper will be returned to you with this part showing through the window of an envelope so the postal services must be able to read it if your Certificate is posted to you. Please submit your answers under your own name, precociousness is one thing, giving a certificate or draw prize to an infant is another.

Post your Answer Paper in the GCSE box at Registration before 11.00 a.m. on SUNDAY, preferably earlier, but watch the GCSE posters for any alteration to this deadline. Please only fold it once on the dotted line.

ALL Answer Papers submitted will be entered into a free draw for a prize – it's NOT highest score wins!

I hope to be able to mark the papers and give certificates on Sunday afternoon, so please see me then. If they aren't ready I will post them to you. In either case the draw prize will be given at the Closing Ceremony.

Finally, Certificates will be given or sent directly to you, no one else will know how you have done unless you tell them. So please have a go, you may be better than you think.

Vernon Brown

Section A, Medium

01 In H G Wells novel who were the enemies of the Eloi?
a/ Demara b/ Lamella c/ Morlocks d/ Norns e/ Vor

02 Whose 1938 radio version of "War of the Worlds" terrified many Americans?
a/ EH b/ HI c/ HO d/ LO e/ OW

03 On which John Christopher novel is the film "No Blade of Grass" based?
a/ EWF b/ TCLV c/ TDOG d/ TGIG e/ TPFS

04 Georges Melies (1861-1938) was a French SF - - -?
a/ Artist b/ Author c/ Editor d/ Filmmaker e/ Publisher

05 "Lest Darkness Fall" is a novel based on what?
a/ Alien invasion b/ Plague c/ Telepathy d/ Time travel e/ Vampirism

06 In ERB's Martian series what do the Martians call Mars?
a/ Rasoom b/ Cosoom c/ Jasoom d/ Barsoom e/ Sasoom

07 In the novel Fahrenheit 451 is what?
a/ Fuel vapour point b/ Paper ignition point c/ Research lab d/ Ship

08 Daniel Leary and Adele Mundy are in whose RCN novels?
a/ IB b/ DD c/ EF d/ JR e/ RT

09 In which film did John Cabal appear?
a/ A b/ FMITM c/ T d/ TIM e/ TTC

10 "Once upon a time there was a Martian named Valentine Michael Smith." Of which novel is this the opening sentence?
a/ FMOM b/ NEF c/ SIASL d/ TT e/ TV

Section B, Easy

11 Which H G Wells novel is set mainly in 802701AD?
a/ AMU b/ TIM c/ TTM d/ WITA e/ WOTW

12/ In which decade was the film "Metropolis" first made?
a/ 1890s b/ 1900s c/ 1910s d/ 1920s e/ 1930s

13/ Complete this film title: "Plan XXX from Outer Space".
a/ Beta b/ Final c/ Invade d/ Nine e/ Xero

14/ In "The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy" what is the name of the Paranoid Android?
a/ Deep Thought b/ Hal c/ Maria d/ Marvin e/ RUR

15/ In the novel "Day of the Triffids" on which island do the main characters end up?
a/ A b/ G c/ IOM d/ IOW e/ M

16/ What was the name of Hans Solo's ship?
a/ Centurion b/ Eagle c/ Millenium Falcon d/ Quest e/ Trader's Love

17/ How many Clangers are there in their latest series?
a/ 4 b/ 5 c/ 6 d/ 7 e/ 8

18/ David Hardy is a/an ----?
a/ Artist b/ Author c/ Editor d/ Film producer e/ Publisher

19/ How many Laws of Robotics were there originally?
a/ 2 b/ 3 c/ 4 d/ 5 e/ 6

20/ "Overhead, without any fuss, the stars were going out" is from which story?
a/ DNMM b/ FATE c/ LTBL d/ TAN e/ TNBNOG

Section C, Hard

21/ When was the first ever SF convention held?
a/ 1933 b/ 1937 c/ 1941 d/ 1945 e/ 1947

22/ Where would you find the "Maison d'Ailleurs"?
a/ Arrakis b/ Brighton c/ Paris d/ Switzerland e/ Videssos

23/ On which play is "Forbidden Planet" (1956 film) based?
a/ RAJ b/ RUR c/ TCT d/ TG e/ TT

24/ Into how many levels are the Timelines divided in HBP's Paratime stories?
a/ 3 b/ 5 c/ 7 d/ 9 e/ 11

25/ Who are/were the authors of "The Enchanted Duplicator"?
a/ BA&JV b/ BS&WW c/ IA&HH d/ JB&MM e/ WO&PA

26/ In which film was the spaceship takeoff countdown first used?
a/ DM b/ FIM c/ LVDLL d/ TFMITM c/WWC

27/ In PKD's "The Man in the High Castle" who is/are occupying the USA?
a/ China b/ France/Spain c/ Germany/Japan d/ Mexico e/ Russia

28/ To start with Captain Barlennan, like his crew, did not like heights. What is the novel?
a/ Circumlunar b/ Colony c/ Deluge d/ Mission of Gravity e/ Traveller

29/ The Angevin Empire is the main setting for stories by whom?
a/ ACC b/DD c/ EES d/ HBP e/ RG

30/ From which story is the following taken: "Her words echoing hauntingly clear in the void she had left behind her. I didn't do anything to die for ...I didn't do anything."
a/ AFA b/ LMOE c/ TCE d/ TLT e/TSM

TAFF Announcement

Jim Mowatt and Mike Glyer write as follows:

Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund administrators Nina Horvath, Curt Phillips and Jim Mowatt, after considering the advantages, have decided to switch direction, running another East/West race for 2016.
This means TAFF is currently looking for nominees from Europe to be the TAFF delegate to North America in 2016 and attend MidAmericon II (the Worldcon in Kansas City, August 17-21).

Jim Mowatt explains, "The knock on effect of this decision is that the 2017 race will be West to East so that we can send someone from North America to Helsinki. This would also mean that we are going in the right direction to aim for New Orleans or San Jose in 2018 and Dublin in 2019.
"So onwards we go: to Kansas City and Beyond. It's TAFF nomination time."

Nominations close at midnight on Friday 11th December, UK time.

History of Novacon

The first Novacon was run in 1971 by Aston University Science Fiction Group, with the second and all subsequent Novacons taking place under the authority of the BSFG.

Years, attendance, guests and chairs are as they appear in the following table.

Year	Attendance		Guest(s)	Chair
1971	Novacon	144	James White	Vernon Brown
1972	Novacon 2	144	Doreen Rogers	Pauline Dungate
1973	Novacon 3	146	Ken Bulmer	Hazel Reynolds
1974	Novacon 4	211	Ken Slater	Dr Jack Cohen
1975	Novacon 5	272	Dan Morgan	Rog Peyton
1976	Novacon 6	317	David Kyle	Stan Eling
1977	Novacon 7	278	John Brunner	Stan Eling
1978	Novacon 8	309	Anne McCaffrey	Laurence Miller
1979	Novacon 9	290	Christopher Priest	Rog Peyton
1980	Novacon 10	495	Brian W Aldiss	Rog Peyton
1981	Novacon 11	362	Bob Shaw	Paul Oldroyd
1982	Novacon 12	373	Harry Harrison	Rog Peyton
1983	Novacon 13	339	Lisa Tuttle	Phil Probert
1984	Novacon 14	333	Robert Holdstock	Steve Green
1985	Novacon 15	340	James White Dave Langford	Phil Probert
1986	Novacon 16	257	EC Tubb Chris Evans	Tony Berry
1987	Novacon 17	315	Iain M Banks	Bernie Evans
1988	Novacon 18	336	Garry Kilworth	Tony Berry
1989	Novacon 19	426	Geoff Ryman	Martin Tudor
1990	Novacon 20	330	Dr Jack Cohen	Bernie Evans
1991	Novacon 21	200	Colin Greenland	Nick Mills
1992	Novacon 22	300	Storm Constantine	Helena Bowles
1993	Novacon 23	350	Stephen Baxter	Carol Morton

Year	Attendance		Guest(s)	Chair
1994	Novacon 24	214	Graham Joyce	Richard Standage
1995	Novacon 25	338	Brian W Aldiss Harry Harrison Bob Shaw Special guest: Iain M Banks	Tony Morton
1996	Novacon 26	281	David Gemmell	Carol Morton
1997	Novacon 27	277	Peter F Hamilton	Martin Tudor
1998	Novacon 28	265	Paul J McAuley	Martin Tudor
1999	Novacon 29	239	Ian Stewart	Carol Morton
2000	Novacon 30	224	Christopher Priest Special Guest: Rog Peyton Guest artist: David A Hardy	Tony Berry
2001	Novacon 31	219	Gwyneth Jones	Tony Berry
2002	Novacon 32	252	Ian McDonald	Martin Tudor
2003	Novacon 33	203	Jon Courtenay Grimwood	Martin Tudor
2004	Novacon 34	227	Ian Watson	Martin Tudor
2005	Novacon 35	216	Alastair Reynolds	Tony Berry
2006	Novacon 36	245	Ken MacLeod	Tony Berry
2007	Novacon 37	227	Charles Stross	Steve Green
2008	Novacon 38	206	Ian R MacLeod	Helena Bowles
2009	Novacon 39	210	Justina Robson	Alice Lawson
2010	Novacon 40	300	Iain M Banks Special Guest: Brian W Aldiss	Vernon Brown
2011	Novacon 41	236	John Meaney	Steve Lawson
2012	Novacon 42	232	Jaine Fenn	Tony Berry
2013	Novacon 43	207	Jo Walton	Yvonne Rowse
2014	Novacon 44	235	Kari Sperring	Steve Green

Novacon 45 Members as at 2nd November 2013 (total 198)

1	Stan Nicholls
2	Anne Nicholls
66	Michael Abbott
5	Brian Aldiss
63	Brian Ameringen
64	Emjay
92	William Armitage
104	Margaret Austin
69	Barbara-Jane
184	Jacey Bedford
27	Minnow
81	Austin
6	Tony
150	Tanya Bourton
7	Helena
151	David Breslin
23	Claire Brialey
166	Chris Brooks
192	Red
78	Pat Brown
79	Vernon Brown
122	Alison Buck
121	Peter Buck
61	Jonathan Cain
60	Steven Cain
117	DC
139	Jacqueline Christy
8	Cat
95	Eddie Cochrane
118	Peter Coleborn
161	Nolley
175	David T Cooper
176	Jane Cooper
178	Libby Cooper
177	Matthew Cooper
191	Helenex
144	Peter Crump
28	½r
18	Serena
146	Tony Cullen
17	Julia Daly
82	Christine
83	Michael
156	Malcolm
85	Steve Davies
115	Martyn Dawe
84	Giulia DeCesare
9	Theresa Derwin
55	Paul Dormer
174	Fran Dowd
173	John Dowd
38	Steve
54	Roger Earnshaw
105	Martin Easterbrook
119	Jan Edwards
153	Janet Edwards
154	John Edwards
87	Sue Edwards
58	Flick
74	Gwen Funnell
133	Josh Gemmell
50	Ron Gemmell
132	Daniel Godfrey
168	Carol Godwin
43	Angela Goodfellow
41	Niall Gordon
129	Helen Claire Gould
130	Mike Gould
96	Steve Green
167	Rebecca Hall
93	Dave Hardy
110	Mr. Peter Harrow
11	Eve
12	John
25	Julian Headlong
97	Julian
143	Alice Hedenlund
142	Anders Hedenlund
10	Dave
113	Penny Hicks
20	Martin Hoare
152	Judi Hodgkin
109	Dave Holmes
124	Terry Jackman
196	Nicholas Jackson
99	Rob Jackson
21	Al
71	Steve Jones
86	Sue Jones
40	Tim Kirk
111	Dave Langford
13	Alice
14	Steve
134	Ann Looker

39 Peter Mabey
100 Sue Mason
116 Incognito
147 Helena
53 Julie McMurray
52 Pat McMurray
162 Mike Meara
163 Pat Meara
37 Kostya Milayev
187 Chrissie Mittenshaw-Hodge
186 Neale MH
123 Deirdre Montanaro
91 Chris Morgan
90 Pauline E Dungate
101 Johnny M
141 Katrina Mountfort
62 Caroline Mullan
170 Chris Murphy
4 Phil
183 Gunnar Nilsson
128 Aisha Nuttall
127 Christopher Nuttall
198 Fionna O'Sullivan
51 James
46 Omega
126 Morag
172 Sanem Ozdural
138 Charles Partington
48 Hal Payne
47 Murphy's Lawyer
49 Jodie Payne
36 Mali Perera
194 John
106 Rog Peyton
107 Catherine Pickersgill
108 Greg Pickersgill
24 Mark Plummer
171 Pete Randall
182 Anders Reuterswärd
45 Roger Robinson
98 Tony Rogers
94 Steve Rogerson
72 Marcus Rowland
76 Sally Rowse
77 Yvonne Rowse
59 Alison Scott
42 Jamie Scott
57 Mike Scott
197 James Shields
165 "Evil" Ivo Shmilev
195 Clive Shortell
22 Harpal Singh
102 Martin
112 Luke Smith
103 Melica
140 Bhob
65 Adrian Snowdon
155 Kate
180 Ian Sorensen
15 Doug S
3 Kari
179 MagZ
16 Richard
44 Tim Stannard
164 Richard Stephenson
131 Chris Stocks
125 Alex Storer
73 Neil Summerfield
190 Misha
189 Zoë Sumra
193 Paul Taylor
33 Alice Ternent
31 George Ternent
32 Linda Ternent
70 Markus
68 Dave Tompkins
160 Lenart Uhlin
89 Tobes Valois
56 Jim Walker
75 Peter Wareham
185 Tommy
145 Ian Warner
35 Alan Webb
34 Gerry Webb
114 Ian Whates
120 Laura Wheatly
188 Bridget Wilkinson
88 Gary S Wilkinson
169 Peter Wilkinson
67 Anne Wilson
80 Caro
19 John Wilson
157 Jonas Wissting
29 Alan Woodford
30 Anne Woodford
181 Shana Worthen

Stan Nicholls – Partial Bibliography

Orcs

First Blood: Bodyguard of Lightning
First Blood: Legion of Thunder
First Blood: Warriors of Tempest

Orcs: First Blood (omnibus edition of the *First Blood* trilogy)

Bad Blood: Weapons of Magical Destruction
Bad Blood: Army of Shadows
Bad Blood: Inferno

Orcs: Bad Blood (omnibus edition of the *Bad Blood* trilogy)

Orcs: Tales of Maras-Dantia (short stories)

Dreamtime Trilogy

Quicksilver Rising (also appeared as *The Covenant Rising*)
Quicksilver Zenith (also appeared as *The Righteous Blade*)
Quicksilver Twilight (also appeared as *The Diamond Isle*)

Nightshade Trilogy

Book of Shadows
Shadow of a Sorcerer
Gathering of Shadows

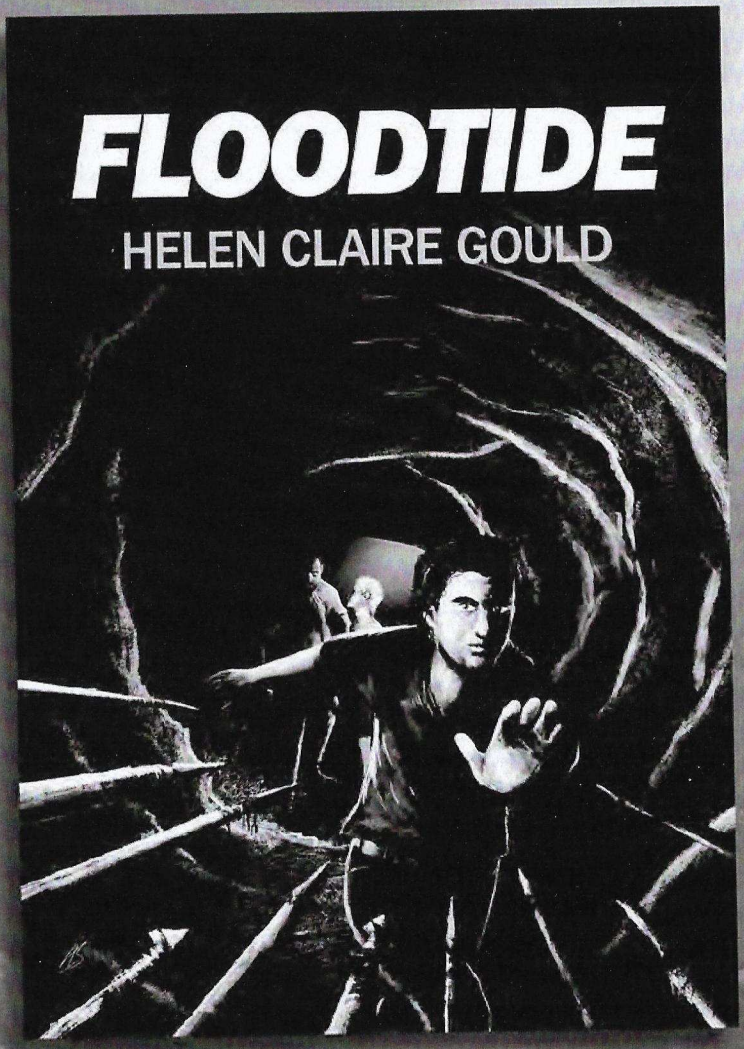
Anne Nicholls / Anne Gay – Partial Bibliography

Novels

Mindsail
The Brooch of Azure Midnight
Dancing on the Volcano
To Bathe in Lightning

Short Fiction

Wishbone
Roman Games
Howie Dreams
The World of the Silver Writer
Le Grand Moans
The Cunning Plan
Nyalis and the Cloud Hill Raiders
Bride of the Sea
By Right of the Stars
Dragonsbridge
Eyes of Day, Eyes of Night



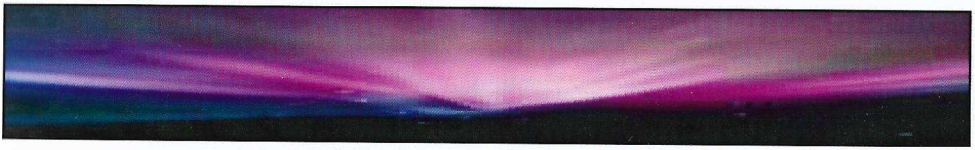
IS HERE

AVAILABLE FROM PORCUPINE BOOKS
IN THE DEALERS' ROOM

The **Birmingham Science Fiction Group** was founded in 1971 to enable local and not so local fans to get together to discuss science fiction and related topics.

We meet on the second Friday of every month, 7:45pm at the Briar Rose Hotel on Bennett's Hill in Birmingham, just 5 minutes walk from New Street Station and handy for all bus routes. We usually start the evening with a guest speaker, often a professional in the field.

If you live anywhere in or around the West Midlands, the BSFG is the group for you! For further information, and a copy of our monthly newsletter, please:

Email: **BHAMSFGROUP@YAHOO.CO.UK**

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